



State Representative

Mary Lou Dickerson

Committees:

Chair, Family Law &
Juvenile Justice Committee
Children & Family Services
Judiciary

Olympia Office:

412 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

E-mail:

dickerso_ma@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TDD for hearing impaired:

1-800-635-9993

The Legislature's Internet Homepage:

<http://leginfo.leg.wa.gov>

2002

36th District Legislative Report

Dear Friends,

The 2002 session of the Legislature started in mid-January with lightning speed, and I expect this pace will continue throughout the short 60-day session. Sixty days is a very short time to address our budget problems and the transportation crisis, but we must find solutions *this* session. Our needs are too urgent to tolerate further delays.

As you'll see in the budget and transportation sections of this newsletter, the challenges are daunting. However, we've been working on the problems during the months when the Legislature was not formally in session, and we will rise to the challenge.

Since my last newsletter, an off-year election has given Democrats a razor-thin majority in the House of Representatives. This will have absolutely no effect on my commitment to approach every state issue in a bipartisan spirit. It will mean some changes, however.

On a personal note, I will now be the sole chairwoman of the Family Law & Juvenile Justice Committee, which will allow me to focus more attention on family issues that impact children and juvenile crime. Our other 36th District representative, Helen Sommers, will chair the Appropriations Committee.

Of course, Helen and I will continue to keep our focus on the needs of people, families and businesses in our area. Our new leadership positions will help us to reflect our community's values when budget and policy decisions are made.

As always, don't hesitate to contact me if you have a problem, suggestion or gripe. Representing you will always be my most important job. You can reach me quickly through the toll-free Hotline (1-800-562-6000) or any of the phone numbers and addresses on this page.

Wishing you a safe and happy new year,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Lou Dickerson".

Mary Lou Dickerson

The mobility crisis

It's no mystery why we're facing a mobility crisis. Because of better car milage and repeal of most car-tab taxes, overall state transportation revenues are about the same as they were in 1980. But during the same period, Washington's population has grown 43 percent – and vehicle miles traveled have soared 88 percent.

The result is what you see and suffer through every day: gridlock that robs time from families and money from our economy. The typical Seattle commuter wastes an average of 53 hours – and \$930 – sitting in traffic every year.

Solving the transportation crisis is also a huge economic development and job issue. Washington businesses lose about \$2 billion a year to the costs of gridlock. No wonder business leaders have made transportation the top priority for 2002!

Working for solutions

Most lawmakers of both parties are determined to pass a transportation plan – and the revenues to make it work – this year. Gov. Locke has already proposed a plan that will help focus the Legislature's discussions. Gov. Locke's plan would:

- Raise \$8.5 billion for transportation improvements, mainly by phasing in a 9-cent gas tax over 3 years.
- Target funding to high-need areas, such as the I-5 corridor. The governor's plan would also upgrade the ferry fleet.
- Give regions more control over their destiny by allowing local voters to approve and finance major local projects, such as fixing or replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct, in partnership with state and federal funds. Money raised locally would be spent locally.
- Impose more than 20 reforms to strengthen accountability and efficiency in transportation funding, planning and construction.
- Spur development of over 20,000 jobs.

This plan is not set in asphalt, and the Legislature is sure to propose changes. I'd like to hear what you think about the governor's plan and changes to it that you'd like to see.

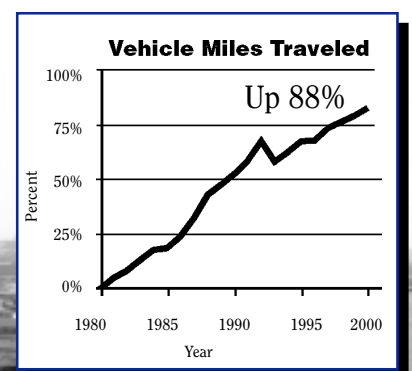
The viaduct: a picture of the problem

The Alaskan Way Viaduct is a good symbol of the transportation problem. The Viaduct was built in 1953 to handle 65,000 cars per day. It was never meant to handle the 115,000 vehicles that use it each day now.

Trying to cram nearly a third as much traffic as I-5 carries into the Viaduct is a recipe for daily gridlock. It is also a threat to our local economy, since the Viaduct is a lifeline to jobs and businesses – and families – in the Ballard, Queen Ann, and Magnolia communities.

We knew even before last February's earthquake that the Viaduct must be fixed or replaced. But now the issue is urgent: some engineers say there is a 1 in 20 chance that another earthquake could permanently close the Viaduct within the next 10 years. The City of Seattle is working in partnership with the state Department of Transportation to design solutions. While engineers are still working on whether it needs to be fixed and upgraded or completely replaced, either approach will be expensive. We'll need more state and regional revenues to get it done.

Since 1980,
vehicle miles
driven in the
state have
grown by 88%.



Painful budget choices

Washington is facing its worst state budget outlook since the early 1990s. Even before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, we were struggling with an expected \$400 million shortfall caused by the economic slowdown and much higher costs for school enrollments, health care and initiative mandates. And remember, initiatives have also reduced 2002-2003 revenues by \$986 million (see *Making Initiatives Work*). But in the aftermath of the 9-11 attacks and Boeing's announcement of major layoffs, we now face a \$1.25 billion problem.

Gov. Locke and the Legislature have already decided that this shortfall must be solved without a general business, property or sales tax increase. Some user fees, liquor and gambling taxes may be hiked, but the lion's share of the problem will have to be addressed by budget cuts. Heart-wrenching choices are unavoidable. After years of budget cutting, no easy choices are left.

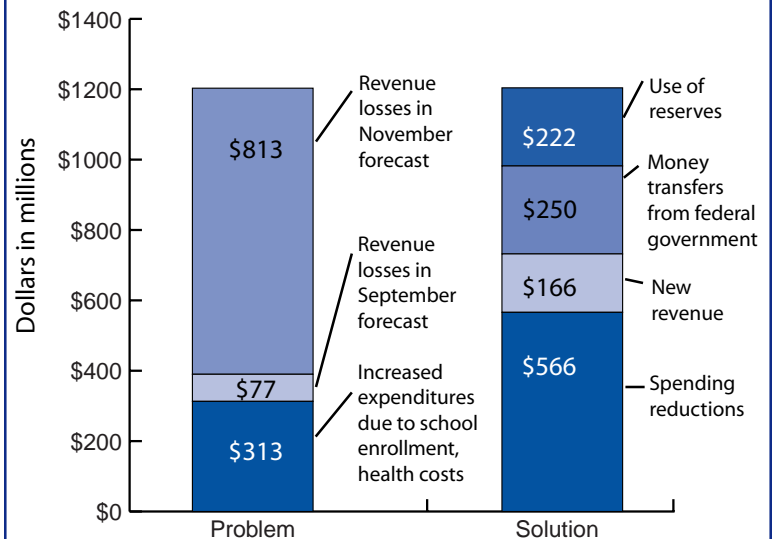
Gov. Locke's budget proposal tries to shield the most vulnerable families from harm, but even it would require \$235 million in cuts to human services – including family services that will impact drug-affected babies, abused children, and the medically indigent. These aren't statistics. These are real children. Nursing home care and home care for seniors and the developmentally disabled also face reductions, as do our colleges and other priorities.

Proposed 2002 Budget cuts

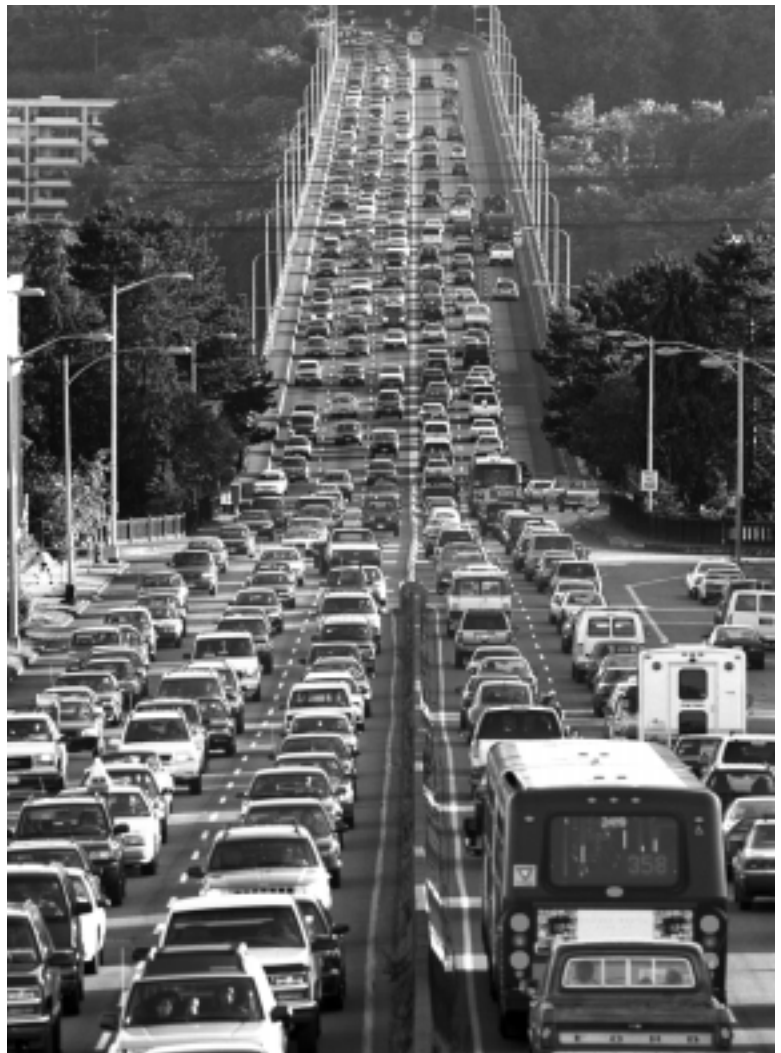
Human Services:	-\$235 million
State-funded employee compensation:	-\$117 million
I-695 backfill to cities & counties:	-\$72 million
Higher education:	-\$54 million
State K-12 programs:	-\$29 million
Other (ecology, etc.):	-\$59 million

No final decisions have been made, and I will continue to stand up for schools and the essential needs of families as the budget progresses. But there will be no way to avoid some of the hardest choices I've ever faced as your representative.

Governor's Proposed Supplemental Budget



Courtesy Senate Committee Services



2002 *Legislative Report*



Making initiatives work

Thank you for your responses to my survey last year on possible steps to make the initiative process work more effectively and predictably. Legislators are proceeding very cautiously on this issue, because we cannot afford to take steps that could weaken the public's right to initiative, or the freedom of speech. I've shared your survey answers with the State Government Committee, and thought you'd enjoy seeing the tallied results. Here they are:

1.

Should the Legislature require people who gather signatures for state initiative petitions to be legal residents of Washington?

Yes-1,254 No-147 Don't know-33

2.

Should the official voters' pamphlet include an objective statement of how each proposed initiative is expected to affect state taxes and spending?

Yes-1,323 No-96 Don't know-19

3.

Should the official voters' pamphlet include a summary of constitutional issues that could arise if an initiative is adopted?

Yes-1,263 No-131 Don't know-36

4.

The Public Disclosure Commission has asked the Legislature to require that all campaign expenditures of \$1,000 or more be reported to the public within 24 hours. Should the Legislature enact this requirement?

Yes-1,102 No-162 Don't know-156

5.

Should the state offer voluntary drafting assistance to authors of initiatives in order to help the authors avoid language that creates unintended consequences?

Yes-978 No-298 Don't know-133

6.

When the public enacts an initiative that requires an increase in state spending, should the increased spending be exempt from the 1993 spending limits set by I-601?

Yes-618 No-404 Don't know-396



PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

Legislative Report
2002

Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper